



MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER 20, 2023, BOARD MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lyle Dittmann at 7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Chairperson: Lyle Dittmann
Vice Chairperson: Steve Inwards
Secretary: Terry Greenwaldt
Public Relations: Wayne Enger
Treasurer: Bruce Albright

Others Present: County Commissioner: Dan Bucholz
OTC Land & Resource: Chris LeClair
BWSR BC: Pete Waller
NRCs District Conservationist: Troy Baumgart
District Manager: Darren Newville
Administrative Secretary: Chantal Tougas
Water Planner/Watershed Coordinator: Don Bajumpaa

Agenda: Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Steve Inwards, to adopt the agenda as presented. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Approve Board Meeting Minutes: Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Wayne Enger, to approve the Board Meeting Minutes as presented. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, seconded by Wayne Enger, to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented, subject to audit. Opposed: none, motion carried. Motion made by Terry Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve the renewal of a CD for 1 year @ 5%. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Bills Paid & Bills Payable: Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt, to approve the Bills Paid and Bills Payable as presented. Opposed: none, motion carried.

LCCMR GRANT – P23-2944

6-P23-2944-02; David Breuer; Compton and Bluffton Townships, sections 5,32; is requesting approval of a cost share assistance contract for his forest stewardship plan. The total estimated cost of the project is \$1,430.00 with cost sharing of \$1,072.50 or 75%, whichever is less. (Consultant written plan). Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

REDEYE 1W1P – C21-3238

C21-3237-27; Ronald Wegscheid; is requesting cost share assistance for his well sealing at the Bluffton Oil Co. The total estimated cost of the project is \$ 900.00 with cost sharing of \$450.00 or 50%, whichever is less. Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.



OTTER TAIL 1W1P – C23-4546

6-C23-4546-02; David Cordes; Girard Township, section 24; is requesting a cost share final payment for his Riprap Shoreline Protection project. The total cost of the project was \$ 9,000.00 with a cost share payment of \$ 4,000.00. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

6-C23-4546-04; Karl Brandstaetter; Otter Tail Township, section 3; is requesting a cost share final payment for his Well Sealing. The total cost of the project was \$ 525.00 with a cost share payment of \$ 262.50. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Steve Inwards to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

6-C23-4546-06; Bruce Christianson; Star Lake Township, section 1; is requesting cost share assistance for his well sealing. The total estimated cost of the project is \$675.00 with cost sharing of \$ 337.50 or 50%, whichever is less. Motion made by Bruce Albright, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

6-C23-4546-07; David Helgerson; Dora Township, section 24; is requesting cost share assistance for his Critical Area Planting. The total estimated cost of the project is \$ 3,358.63 with cost sharing of \$ 2,518.97 or 75%, whichever is less. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

C-23-4546-05; Craig Gode; Gorman Township, section 25; is requesting permission to cancel his cost share contract. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

6-C23-4546-08; Dan Bucholz; Gorman Township, section 25; is requesting cost share assistance for his Pit Closure. The total estimated cost of the project is \$ 26,000.00 with cost sharing of \$ 15,000.00 or 75%, whichever is less. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Steve Inwards to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

COVER CROP – C21-3238

C21-3238-11; Doug Lang; Inman Township; is requesting a cost share partial payment for his Multi Species Cover Crop. The total cost of the project was \$ 2,820.00 for a 3-year contract with a cost share payment of \$ 940.00. Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

C21-3238-11; Justin Dittmann; Homestead Township; is requesting a cost share partial payment for his Multi Species Cover Crop. The total cost of the project was \$ 9,600.00 for a 3-year contract with a cost share payment of \$ 3,200.00. Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried. (*Note: Lyle Dittmann abstained from voting*)

STATE COST SHARE

2023-01; City of Vergas; Hobart Township, Section 19; is requesting a final cost share payment for their Conservation Cover – Erosion Control project. The total cost of the project was \$ 1,213.20 with a cost share payment of \$ 757.60. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.



District Manager's Report: Presented by Darren Newville.

District Conservationist's Report: Presented by Troy Baumgart

- CSP – Documentation due September 30th, letters were sent to procedures.
- EQIP – Continuing to certify/pay on prior year projects. EQIP 2024-1 application deadline is October 6th for new applications.
- CRP – Completed for FY23. Practice certifications and contract mods to deal with, which is mostly change of ownership.
- RCPP – Producers are completing projects. Trying to make payments as soon as possible, but the process isn't the easiest.

8:13 a.m. Warren Bachmann entered the meeting.

County Commissioner's Report: Presented by Dan Bucholz

- There will be a meeting on October 10, 2023, regarding recreational use of marijuana and how the County will be handling it locally.
- Recycling discussion was had.

Other Agency Reports: Pete Waller @ BWSR – Pete talked about the legislative changes to the State Cost Share program now the Conservation Contracts Program that will start with FY24 grants. These changes give the SWCD more flexibility in the use of the funds.

Old Business

TSA Update: nothing to update.

8:33 a.m. Don left the meeting

New Business

Meetings/Trainings: Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve those wanting to attend BWSR Academy. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Carpet Cleaning: Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Wayne Enger to approve carpet cleaning of \$900 by Sota. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Public Comments: Warren Bachmann attended to discuss the issues on the Toad River with beaver dams and e. Coli issues.

Adjourn: Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 9:10 a.m.

District Managers Report
September 2023
Submitted by Darren Newville

- **Tree Program** – Staff continue to meet with landowners to provide technical assistance with potential projects for next year. Tanner will begin placing our nursery orders in the next couple of weeks.
- **Forest Stewardship Planning:** Anne completed one plan and is working on 2 more. The West Central Landscape Committee met in New York Mills on August 22. Anne assisted with all the planning and logistics for that meeting. Anne attended the Crow Wing Watershed Forest Landscape Stewardship Plan meeting on August 10th and provided additional written input for that plan.
- **Drill Rental/Custom Seeding/Seed Sales** – The drill was rented to 3 landowners in August. Tanner is working with landowners to get seed for fall seeding. There have been 9 orders placed. He has two custom seeding jobs scheduled for this fall.
- **RIM/CREP/CRP** – Staff continue working on the CRP contribution agreement writing plans, doing site inspections, and certifying projects. They are also working with landowners on RIM applications at the various stages of the process and doing the required site inspections on easements that need them.
- **MAWQCP** – Staff continue to work with producers on the MAWQCP assessment, certifications, endorsements, and cost-share. Jim has also been working to complete the reviews of previously certified farms as required.
- **MDA NFMP/NMI Project** –Staff assisted MDA with the Perham LAT meeting held on August 20th. Nathan and I attended the meeting.
- **AgBMP Loan Program** – Both offices continue to take calls, answer questions, and aid landowners requesting information or loans. Liz worked with the MDA staff on some larger loan applications in Otter Tail County.
- **Irrigation RCPP** – We continue to work with the partners on this project. We also continue to work with MDA and NRCS to refine the reporting. Some of the projects are getting installed and we will be processing the payments soon.
- **Red Eye Watershed** –The TAC met on August 8th. The watershed partners provided project updates and discussed the need for a WBIF grant extension. The extension will provide additional time for landowners to complete projects. BWSR informed the watershed partners that FY 25 WBIF funds will increase to \$1,112,800. This is \$406,800 more than our last grant. The increase in funding will help support staff capacity and allow us to complete more projects. Next TAC meeting is Nov 14th.
- **SWAG** (Surface Water Assessment Grant) Don and Alyson have completed this year's water sampling at 8 locations in the Redeye River Watershed. Samples collected are analyzed for

temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, conductivity, total suspended solids, and e coli bacteria. Lab reports from RMB show elevated e coli levels this spring at various locations.

- **Oak/Bluff Creek Sub-Watershed** – Staff created and mailed a flier for the upcoming Grazing School that offered a scholarship to producers within those sub-watersheds. Two producers have registered for those scholarships. Staff also mailed an additional targeted letter on the available funding for landowners with parcels within the sub-watershed.
- **Red Eye Culvert Inventory** - Staff have been conducting trial runs of the culvert inventorying in North Germany township. Tanner and Alyson will be doing more field inventorying work in late September when field work slows down. Alyson continues doing the remote mapping portion from the office.
- **LCCMR Tree Planting Pilot Program** Project partners are in the process of sending outreach letters to landowners. Landowner response for tree planting has been limited as the program is restrictive. The program also provides opportunities for landowners to enroll into SFIA and RIM. Don continues to hold bi-monthly calls with BWSR Forester and is providing project updates to partners. The next Local Forestry Committee meeting will be held on October 26th.
- **Otter Tail River Watershed** – The TAC met on August 7th. The planning grant has been completed and the watershed partners have begun to encumber implementation funds for priority projects. The TAC also reviewed and discussed the possibility of developing a GIS tool to identify and manage impervious surfaces around priority lakes. The tool would help reduce runoff and phosphorus loading to surface waters. The group was informed by BWSR that FY 25 WBIF funding will increase to \$1,507,000. This is approximately \$242,000 more than our last grant. BWSR expects the trend for increased WBIF grant funds to continue. Staff also developed and mailed outreach letters to landowners in the Paul Lake watershed. The letter promotes best management practices to improve priority water and land resources. The next TAC meeting is scheduled for November 6th.
- **Crow Wing Watershed** – A TAC meeting was held on August 2nd. The watershed partners received an update on the two public kickoff meetings that were held in July, heard presentations from White Earth Nation, DNR, MDH, and MDA. The partners also discussed issue statements and visioning. The TAC will continue to work on prioritizing planning regions, brainstorming emerging issues and visioning over the next couple of months. The next TAC Meeting is scheduled for Sept 6th.

A Citizen's Advisory Committee met on August 29th. The CAC members shared information about themselves and what they think is important in the Crow Wing Watershed. The CAC learned about the 1W1P planning process and spent time brainstorming issues and organized the issues into planning themes. The CAC issues will be shared with the TAC members at their September meeting.

- **Long Prairie Watershed** – The Steering Committee met on August 31st. The implementation tracking tool has been completed and is like the one we developed for the Otter Tail River 1W1P. The planning grant has been completed and the group is now encumbering implementation funds for priority projects in the watershed. Next meeting is October 6th.
- **Other Watersheds** – Don continues to be involved with the Chippewa, Pomme de Terre, Buffalo-Red, and Mustinka/Bois de Sioux Watersheds, discussing quarterly work and implementation.
- **Irrigation Scheduling Program** – Staff continue to run weekly routes. Tanner and Pete have stepped in to assist as Nathan and Nicole are moving on to other positions. They have been pulling the rain gauges the past few weeks and should be wrapped up by the end of this week.
- **Shoreland Program** – Staff conducted 30 site visits in August and are working on designs. A few of the sites have been sent over to the joint engineering staff to look at. They have also conducted site inspections on 16 previous projects. Liz presented to the Stuart Lake Association which has led to 7 site visits. Liz and Pete have also been working with the OTC COLA to plan a shoreland project tour for September 12. From what I have heard there are about 50 people registered to attend. I was the guest speaker at the Aug. OTC COLA meeting. There were about 30 people in attendance.
- **Feedlots** – Mitch has completed the required number of feedlot inspections for 2023. He will still need to enter the data into the MPCA online program (TEMPO).
- **County Ag Inspector** – Staff are responding to complaints about weeds. There were a few formal notices sent to landowners. Liz is working on contracting an herbicide treatment for one of those sites due to no response from the landowner. The County will assess the costs to the landowner for that treatment.
- **Engineering Assistance** – Our joint engineering staff continue to help support us with projects needing engineering assistance.
- **Extension Educator Position** – I have had several emails back and forth with Sarah Chur. There is a new and improved draft position description and announcement. I do not have any specifics on when the announcement will be published again, but I am hoping it will be soon.
- **Education and Outreach** – Staff have started planning the Wadena SWCD Conservation Days. Sessions will be held in the first week of October. We conducted the September 11th tour for the EOT and WOT SWCD Boards, the County Board, and State Legislators. It was a nice day with a great turnout. Everyone who attended seemed to be very engaged and interested in what we are working on. Kristi continues to work with 3Plains on the new Wadena SWCD website and completing the applications for the Conservation Cooperator Awards for each SWCD.

- **Otter Tail Dam Modifications:** The Big Pine Lake dam project is completed. The contractor will be moving to the Rush Lake dam next. I hope the construction starts on that soon.
- **Administration** – Staff continue to do the day-to-day tasks needed to keep the SWCDs running smoothly. Chantal and Kristi continue to work on the process of tracking all our grants and agreement financial information. Kristi is inputting project information into eLINK. Chantal, Anne, & I did a quick review of every grant and where we are with each of them. We met with the Otter Tail County Budget Committee to review our 2024 budget request.
- **Training and Meetings** – Staff continue to take training courses as needed to develop their JAA. Training attended includes the following topics: Conservation Planner Basic Training, Prescribed Fire, Leadership, Soil Health, & the CLC field day.
- **Staffing** – The Personnel Committee conducted interviews on Friday, September 15th for the position in Wadena.